

November 25, 2018 • Thanksgiving/Consecration Sunday

“Our North Star” – GRATEFUL Sermon Series
Sermon by Rev. Patricia Farris



James 1:17

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

We opened our worship service this morning, proclaiming our faith, saying:

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.
We glorify our God with songs of thanksgiving and joy.
God has done great things for us, filling us with grace.
God fed our ancestors in the wilderness. God clothes us with hope.
We will offer our hearts to God, always saying, 'Thank you!' to the One who loves us.
We ask your blessing, O God our Creator, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Last Sunday, nine members of the Malibu UMC and their pastor, the Rev. Sandy Liddell, helped us understand what this very faith is all about. “God fed our ancestors in the wilderness. God clothes us with hope.” They graced us with their presence in worship. Unable to drive to their own church, many evacuated from their homes, one having lost their home in the fires... They graced us with their presence in worship here. “God fed our ancestors in the wilderness. God clothes us with hope.”

The next day, one emailed us on behalf of their group. They had had one of you take their picture sitting here on the chancel steps, in front of this altar table of abundance and thanksgiving. They were smiling, filled with the joy of the Spirit of God. They wrote:

Dear Rev. Farris, “This past Sunday, a few of us from Malibu UMC had the privilege of worshiping at First United Methodist of Santa Monica. We had a wonderful experience, being received by your warm and friendly congregation and were made to feel so welcomed. We can attest that the experience was a comforting respite after a difficult week. Thanks to [your member] for giving me a bottle of beautiful perfume to pass on to someone, which will be such a treat. And it was so nice of [another] to stop by our table while we were having lunch at Coogie’s. Thank you and please thank everyone on our behalf for such a wonderful worship experience.”

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.
We glorify our God with songs of thanksgiving and joy.
God has done great things for us, filling us with grace.
God fed our ancestors in the wilderness. God clothes us with hope.
We will offer our hearts to God, always saying, 'Thank you!' to the One who loves us.

This morning, we hear that same spirit echoed in the words from James. “Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Creator of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

The scripture wants us to understand that every good gift, every act of giving, not just from God, but every good gift, every act of giving, of welcoming, of sharing, sends light and gifts to benefit and sustain. Every good gift, every act of giving is a reflection of the one light, shed upon the whole world, a light that shines everywhere, at all times, accessible to all. Even amidst the darkness of destruction and loss, of heartache and grief, the light of God shines in every good gift, every generous act of giving.

Today is both Thanksgiving Sunday and Consecration Sunday, when we dedicate our financial pledge for the ministry and mission of the church in this coming year. Our theme of “Grateful” has helped us see how “gratitude unlocks the fullness of life...how gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.” Most of all, we comprehend how it is that being grateful recalibrates our hearts and over time

shapes and guides our life. Gratefulness becomes a bright star, leading us to a new, deeper, more generous place. And in this way, gratefulness changes our hearts and changes our world.

Next Sunday, we move into the beautiful season of Advent as we begin to prepare our hearts for the birth of the Christ Child. Our theme this year will be “Shine Light.” We’re grateful to Jim Smith and our Chancel Choir for helping us begin that transition with today’s anthem. As the notes in the OOW explain, Bach wrote this piece to be performed on the 27th Sunday after Easter, which every so often falls on the Sunday after Thanksgiving, one week before Advent begins. This year that works out to be November 25th, with Advent beginning on December 2. The first performance of the work was on the 25th of November, 287 years ago today.

“Wake, awake, for night is flying.” Wake, awake-- God has done great things for us, filling us with grace. Wake, awake-- God fed our ancestors in the wilderness. God clothes us with hope. Wake, awake---God WILL shine light into every place of darkness and despair. Wake, awake--every good gift, every act of giving is a reflection of the one light, shed upon the whole world, a light that shines everywhere, at all times, accessible to all.

Gratitude, our bright north star—God’s light shining in our hearts, minds, souls, and through us, in every good gift, God’s light shining anew in our world.

And so we say “Thank you” to the One who loves us, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Notes:

This Stewardship Sermon Series is based on Diana Butler Bass’ book: *Grateful—The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks*. New York: HarperOne, 2018.

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